

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR ORD CENTRALIZED POSITIONS AT GS 14 and ABOVE

I. Questions About Submission

1. Where can I find guidance, forms and instructions for promotions?

- a. For contacts, instructions on how to prepare and submit nomination packets:
https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm
- b. VHA Program Guide 1200.03 for centralized positions:
<https://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/ProgramGuide-1200-03.pdf>
- c. OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG):
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gresch.pdf>
- d. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Medical and Health Group, 0600:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/0600/gs0600.pdf>
- e. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, 0400:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/0400/gs0400p.pdf>
- f. OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Mathematical Sciences Group, 1500:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/standards/1500/gs1500p.pdf>

2. **Is this program for clinicians?** No, the Centralized Positions program is only available for Title 5, research scientists who are not licensed to practice medicine in the US.

3. **Is a researcher at my VAMC eligible for this program?** The Centralized Positions at GS 14 and above program is for research scientist positions **funded by** VA Office of Research and Development services (BLR&D, CSR&D, RR&D and HSR&D). Administrative and/or supervisory positions are **not eligible** for this program funded by ORD.

Note: VAMCs can request that ORD assess nominations for assignment at GS-14 and GS-15 for select administrative/supervisory positions that are funded locally and costed out to the medical care appropriation, provided that those positions include scientific investigation as a major duty (i.e. 25% more of duties).

4. What type of positions can we request?

- a. Title 5 Non-Supervisory Research Positions at GS 14 or 15 for Current VA employees
- b. Title 5 Non-Supervisory Research Positions at GS 14 or 15 for New appointments (e.g. Merit investigators who have just received an intent to fund).
- c. The incumbent must meet the standards in the RGEG.

- d. A minimum of a 5/8ths VA salaried appointment unless there is a waiver to this requirement (see ORD Program Guide 1200.15, Eligibility for VA Research Support).
5. **Can someone be promoted from GS 13 to GS 15?** Yes – provided the incumbent meets the standards/requirements for that GS level in the RGEG. The positions under the purview of the Centralized Positions are Excepted Service, term-limited appointments, so do not have a 1-year time in grade requirement for promotions, unlike competitive positions, which do. This is due to a new appointment that is not subject to the time in grade requirements.
 6. **To whom should letters of support be addressed?** They should be addressed to the Director of the VA Office of Research and Development ORD service that funds the position.
 7. **Can the ACOS/R serve as a local panel member?** If the ACOS/R is or would be the supervisor of the position, then this would be a conflict of interest.
 8. **Do we still submit to ORD if local CCU classifies as G-S13 even though our local panel grades at 14 or 15?** Yes - The package should still be sent to the VA ORD Centralized Promotions Panel for reviewed even if the CCU classifies at the GS-13, as long as the local panel determined a GS-14 and/or GS-15 level.
 9. **I'm still a little unsure of what to do for Hybrid Title 38: Once the local panel has completed the 4670s and the submission packet is complete. Do we take it to our local HR and then once it is returned it gets sent up to your office?** Hybrid Title 38 (HT38) positions do NOT go through the same process as Title 5 positions. HT38 personnel actions follow a “qualification process” managed and processed by your local HR service. (see question #1.10) Please contact the Promotions POC for the funding service for guidance on what to submit to ORD.
 10. **When going through VISN for research psychologist, do we follow these same procedures, i.e. hold a local panel, etc.?** No - Since a Psychologist is a Hybrid Title 38 (HT38) position, they do not go through the same process for Title 5 positions. Your local HR personnel in charge of HT38 positions can advise you on preparation of the Functional Statement and local qualification processes. However, if the position is funded by VA ORD and is at GS 14 or above, once the HT38 position is processed locally, the packet must be sent to the ORD Centralized Positions POC for your funding service in order to obtain approval and sign-off by the CRADO and DEAN (for GS 15 positions). Please contact your POC for required documents. The HT38 positions are not reviewed centrally by our panels.
 11. **Why is HSR&D review period only twice a year?** HSR&D has does not currently have staff capacity to assist with more frequent reviews, and there is also a limited capacity of HSR&D reviewers at the appropriate GS level willing to serve as panel SMEs from sites that are unconflicted with the nominations.

II. Human Resource Review Questions

1. **What is the Local Promotions Review Panel Evaluation?** Before the VISN CCU classifier can evaluate the research PD, the local VAMC must convene a local promotions review panel consisting of at least 3 subject matter experts. Each panel member must complete and sign a separate Position Classification Worksheets (VA Form 4670) for each packet. Each reviewer must be a VA employee that is at least at the GS level (or equivalent) sought by the nominee. No member should have a real or perceived conflict of interest with the nominee.
2. **What must the VISN CCU classifier do for each packet submitted by the local R&D Service?**
 - a. CCU receives PD, Signed OF-8 and at least 3 signed Position Classification Worksheets (VA Form 4670) for each position. Use local processes for submission to CCU
 - b. Completes and signs Research Position Evaluation Report (ORD Form 2020-1) with a clear justification for the scores assigned for each factor and the Total Point Value and grade level for which the PD has been classified.
 - c. Reviews and initials Item 15d on the OF8. (The local CCU does NOT sign in Box 21, this is completed at VHACO)

NOTE: If the ORD Form 2020-1 is not signed by the VISN Classifier the promotions package will be returned without action.

3. **Why does the Local CCU often change the job series we determine?** We do understand that this can happen. Often, a candidate's education can fit 1 or more series. Office of Personnel Management defines the occupational series and this review and determination is conducted by the local classifier (see OPM Group Classification Standards above in I. 1.).
4. **Can you explain the rationale for having both local review and a second central review?** As the position is hired and managed by the local VAMC, local review and classification is a very important step. The second level review by VACO is to ensure standardization of the positions and standards across the nation and to have approval at the VA ORD level by the CRADO/DEAN as these positions are funded by ORD.
5. **The CCU evaluation report is not on VA Form 3963, but on ORD Form 2020-1? Where can we download a copy of ORD Form 2020-1?** This is a new form. It is available at: https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm. Please also see this website for updated instructions and checklists for preparing nomination packages. The checklist will be updated once proposed changes are approved.
6. **You mentioned that this pertains to centrally funded positions only. I have an administrative position (ACOS/R) but I am also an independent investigator and just received a promotion to Full Professor at my academic affiliate. Can I still apply for a centralized promotion from a GS14 to a GS15?** Typically, the ACOS/R&D position is funded by the local Medical Center and is not an ORD centrally funded research position due to the administrative and supervisory nature of the role. Therefore, an ACOS position typically would not be submitted to The Centralized Positions program and instead would be classified and funded locally. However, please

see the answer to question I.3. Of note: VAMCs can request that ORD assess nominations for assignment at GS-14 and GS-15 for select administrative/supervisory positions that are funded locally and costed out to the medical care appropriation, provided that those positions include scientific investigation as a major duty (i.e. 25% more of duties).

7. **We have been asked to list all publications as part of factor 4. Is this common practice or what should we be putting there along with text?** Listing publications in factor 4 is acceptable, but not standard practice. You could summarize the type, number and quality of publications in Research Factor 4 instead.
8. **Are promotion standards for data scientists or statisticians different than for an 0601 Research scientist? Their role is often not to be a PI but to be on LOTS of grants and offer their expertise in a critical way -- like a senior scientist in other fields.** If the position is Title 5 and funded by ORD, then for the purposes of the Centralized Positions program, there are multiple occupational series that support data scientist other than 0601, including but not limited to, the Epidemiology - Medical and Health Care Series (0601); Actuarial Science Series (1510); Operations Research Series (1515); Statistician Series (1530), and IT Specialist - Data Administration (2210).
9. **Is the process any different if a GS-14 Research scientist is transferring from one VA to another VA?** If the duties of the Research Scientist remain the same at the new VA (i.e. are not administrative/supervisory), then the Position Description remains applicable and moves with the incumbent. Provided the research and duties have not changed, the Position description may be submitted to the local VA's HR classification unit for a new PD number and pen and ink changes for the location of the position.

III. **Questions about Supervisory Positions versus Non-supervisory Centralized Research Positions:**

1. **What does "supervisory positions are not eligible for this program" mean? I am a "supervisory research health scientist" now as GS14. So, the current discussion means my GS15 application should be as "research health scientist"?** Per VA Office of Research & Development Program Guide 1200.03 for Centralized Positions of Research Scientist, GS-14 and Above, the Scope on page 3 notes: This Program Guide applies to nonsupervisory professional research work at the GS-14 and above level funded by ORD and meets the criteria in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG) published in September 2006. If the position does not meet this intent, it would not be authorized as a Centralized Position funded by ORD.

Examples of Supervisory functions that do not meet the intent of the RGEG include:

- A. Completing and signing performance evaluations;
- B. Developing performance standards.
- C. Addressing performance issues;
- D. Making formal recommendations for superior performance awards, etc.

- E. Giving advice, counsel, or instruction to employees on both work and administrative matters
- F. Interviewing candidates for positions in the unit; recommending appointment, promotion, or reassignment to such positions.
- G. Hearing and resolving complaints from employees, referring group grievances and more serious unresolved complaints to a higher-level supervisor or manager.
- H. Effecting minor disciplinary measures, such as warnings and reprimands, recommending other action in more serious cases;
- I. Identifying developmental and training needs of employees, providing or arranging for needed development and training;
- J. Finding ways to improve production or increase the quality of the work directed.

Examples of non-supervisory Research Management functions that do meet the intent of the RGEG include:

- A. Formulating and planning of experiments;
- B. Mentoring and training of students, fellows and junior researchers;
- C. Technical oversight of research staff working on a project.

2. **Where are supervisory GS-14s and GS-15s positions submitted and what is the process? Some of our PIs have large research programs, with 3+ VA paid staff, which would make them supervisory.** Supervisory positions would be funded locally and classified locally. Employees can be supervisors (i.e. supervising 3 or more VA paid staff), but the positions must be funded and classified locally and not by VA ORD. Please see question I.3 for exceptions where ORD may assess administrative or supervisory positions upon request. However, these positions are still funded locally by the medical center appropriation.
3. **If the PI isn't supervising the individuals, they hire in support of their research grants, then who is?** That is a local determination. Please see question III.1 for examples of supervisory and non-supervisory duties.
4. **What if a non-supervisory Research Scientist transfers to a new position that is supervisory position or non-research?** Then it would need to be funded and classified locally. Please see question III.2, above.
5. **The problem with converting to non-supervisory PDs means you can't be the person to sign performance appraisals. If one supervises other researchers for the study (which is for the scientific responsibilities), then that is an issue for them to do performance reviews in ePerformance.** Correct. Scientific responsibilities do not apply to supervision. A non-supervisory position can provide input on a performance plan but should not be completing the performance evaluation unless it is for 2 or fewer staff. In ePerformance it is possible to designate someone as a Matrix rater who would provide input but not complete the evaluation or sign it. A supervisory position would be funded locally and classified locally.

- 6. Presumably at the GS-14 and GS-15 grades the position holders would have supervisory responsibilities even if the PD does not specifically identify the position as being supervisory. Is that acceptable?** Formulating research plans, and providing technical oversight and guidance of trainees, laboratory staff and junior researchers can be part of the Research Scientist's duties and meet the intent of these positions. Formal supervision, such as the items addressed above in III.1. is not.

- 7. If someone has been promoted via this method but we want to make them supervisory later, can you speak to the method required?** This would be a new position and would be funded locally and classified locally. Please see question III.2, above.